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For participants only

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Substantive session of 1992

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 31st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 17 July 1992, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco)
(Vice-President)

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Operational activities for development (continued)

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Amaziane (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/47/264-E/1992/71, E/1992/64, E/1992/73, E/1992/98, E/1992/L.23)

Mr. KOBAYASHI (Japan) wondered how the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) could justify the choice of the six particular ex-Soviet republics where field offices were to be opened in the light of a decision of the Governing Council six weeks before stating that priority should be given to countries whose per capita income was lowest and whose programme resources were highest. His delegation had inquired about the matter earlier but had not yet received a clear answer. It raised the issue of how serious UNDP was about implementing the decisions of its own Governing Council. He was making this statement for the record; his delegation intended to ask for an informal meeting on the subject.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) repeated his two questions from the previous meeting regarding what efforts the United Nations funds and agencies, especially those without decentralization mechanisms, had made to delegate responsibilities to the country level, and to what extent there had been an attempt to speed up the decision-making process where decentralization was not possible.

Mr. SORENSEN (International Labour Organisation) said that, in addition to the internal reforms pursuant to resolution 44/211 mentioned at the previous meeting, multidisciplinary teams were being established whose make-up varied with the needs of the various subregions and with their technical competence, the object being to enable the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to emphasize programme-level services and bring its technical capabilities closer to its constituents. The division of

(Mr. Sorensen, ILO)

responsibilities between field and headquarters was changing; field offices were being given the main responsibility for close consultation with Governments, workers and employers.

Mr. KITATANI (United Nations Population Fund) said, with respect to training, that the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had taken part in the Turin management coordination workshops held under the auspices of the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) (CCSQ (OPS)) and would continue to support follow-up steps in that area, particularly with regard to field training for integrated programming at the national level.

UNFPA had initiated a new successor support cost arrangement, accompanied by a training plan. Guidelines had been prepared explaining the role of all partners in operational activities and would be useful as training material. UNFPA would organize periodic workshops on substantive subjects for technical support staff working within the new technical support cost arrangement.

With respect to decentralization, UNFPA had in 1988 adopted a policy of accelerated decentralization to field offices, including delegation of authority within specified limits, with mechanisms to ensure accountability. The benefits of that exercise had been clear and the problems minimal. Governments had been favourable to increased decentralization, and there would be a positive impact on national execution.

Mr. WATT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), speaking also on behalf of the Inter-agency Support Cost Task Force, said that the new arrangements on support costs were the result of a long collaboration between the task force and UNDP. They were necessarily complex, but everyone in the specialized agencies fully accepted the intent of the legislation, which was to reduce their administrative overhead.

As a result of the new arrangements, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) had lost a number of technical staff, mainly short-term assistants, whom national staff had replaced to some extent; there was, however, a net loss to its programmes. The arrangements had come into effect on 1 January 1992, but resident representatives had had the option, until 1 July, of approving projects under the old or the new regime.

(Mr. Watt, FAO)

The result had been that hundreds of projects had been approved under the old, and fewer than five under the new, which was admittedly quite experimental. The new arrangements had, however, arisen from deliberations of the General Assembly and the Council begun more than three and a half years before. If they were not put more fully into practice, the number of technical support programmes would likely be maintained in 1992, but drop off sharply in 1993 and 1994. Though it was premature to do a full evaluation of the situation, the Council and General Assembly should make a preliminary assessment at the 1992 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities. It would thus be possible to streamline the arrangements and ensure that the intent of the legislation was followed.

Mr. MATTHEWS (United Nations Development Programme) said that UNDP would follow a policy of strategic decentralization, retaining accountability at headquarters while detailed implementation of programming was decentralized to the country level.

A proposal had been made for an "enhanced division manager": the field office would have a single contact within the headquarters secretariat to answer questions, give guidance, and find solutions to problems arising at the country level. The proposal had generated much debate. The intent was to bring the decision-making process much closer to the programming process at that level. An action committee would review all projects of more than a billion dollars and all national programmes supported by UNDP; once the programmes had been assessed, further consideration of their component projects would be given at the country level.

Mr. DEMONGEOT (United States of America) said that his delegation would like to see the new arrangements implemented expeditiously. UNDP and agency staff should receive proper training. He had noted that many resident representatives did not know the difference between national execution and government execution, which gave no role to agencies.

The resident coordinator should carry out, first, his own duties, and only then - if there was not enough work for two - those of the UNDP resident representative. UNDP, as the central United Nations funding mechanism, was a very important component of the development system, and its resident

(Mr. Demongeot, United States)

representative should have a system-wide orientation, but the primary role of the resident coordinator should be to represent the system as a whole.

Mr. ALTESMAN (United Nations Children's Fund) said, with respect to decentralization, that different organizations had different structures, often, though not always, for good reason. Those structures were relevant to the way in which better coordination was brought about.

A case in point was the relationship between the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), which was like a marriage; no two organizations were closer, and UNICEF did nothing of import without the close cooperation of WHO. And yet, their structures could not be more different. WHO had a strong headquarters and a very strong regional level, with fewer staff at the country level. At UNICEF, in contrast, 85 per cent of the staff were at the country level. Its headquarters staff for all of Latin America consisted of three people, and another three were responsible for the entire Middle East. Decision-making authority was at country level, and the three people in New York were less senior than those in the field.

Such factors needed to be taken into account in restructuring the United Nations system; decentralization should proceed expeditiously, but it was important to be aware of how the structures might support it.

Ms. ASHRAF (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had been following a policy of decentralization for a number of years and was currently implementing further decentralization measures recommended by a recent independent study. Field units had full power to delegate authority and UNESCO regional offices were increasingly participating in inter-agency activities at the field level. She cited figures to show the extent of decentralization within UNESCO, but conceded that there was still room for improvement and noted the evaluation of regional units and field offices currently under way and scheduled for completion in 1992, when UNESCO would be able to report back to the Council on its outcome.

The PRESIDENT said that some agencies were reluctant to draw conclusions on the new agency support arrangements as they had only been in force since January 1992, while others had argued that, according to preliminary evaluations, the arrangements were leading to a loss of technical capabilities in the field. He wondered whether representatives of the agencies could clarify their views on the matter.

Mr. SORENSEN (International Labour Organisation) said that no formal review was being called for but that the agencies were merely expressing a common concern that efforts must be made to ensure that the new arrangements were properly understood and worked effectively. In his view, the key element of the new policy thrust was to strengthen the technical capacities of agencies while disinclining them from an unnecessary involvement in administrative work, and he noted that the opportunities for the technical involvement of agencies were significantly increased under nationally executed projects.

The PRESIDENT wondered if the representative of FAO could explain whether there was any connection between the new arrangements and the reported loss of technical capabilities in the field.

Mr. SORENSEN (International Labour Organisation) said, with reference to the reported loss of technical capabilities, that care must be taken to ensure that reductions in the number of resident experts in the field did not lead to a concomitant reduction in the capacity of agencies to provide substantial technical services in the context of UNDP-financed programmes.

Mr. TAL (United Nations Development Programme) said, to supplement information provided earlier by the representative of FAO and in response to questions raised by the United States, that the Governing Council of UNDP had determined that the new support costs regime would only come into force when US$ 500 million of fifth-cycle resources had been committed against the old regime and that projects could continue to be approved under the old regime, provided their preparations were sufficiently advanced. Consequently, with very few exceptions, the old regime had remained in force until the end of June. For that reason, there could be no connection between any slow-down in delivery and the implementation of the new arrangements. As yet, insufficient

(Mr. Tal, UNDP)

experience had been gained of the new arrangements for any conclusions to be drawn and he noted that the Administrator of UNDP had been instructed to undertake an evaluation, in close cooperation with agencies.

UNDP believed that the key to the success of the arrangements lay in training and that it was therefore organizing an extensive programme to train both agency and government staff in their implementation. In 1993 a major training programme for all field personnel would be held, to ensure that the new arrangements were fully embedded in the United Nations operational system.

Mr. WATT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that, in view of the key importance of operational activities, it was essential for the Economic and Social Council to be kept fully informed of any experience in implementing the new arrangements and he therefore proposed that, while it would be premature to attempt a full-scale review of those arrangements at the General Assembly, some form of information session should none the less be organized.

The PRESIDENT welcomed the information on training measures provided by UNDP and noted the importance of including government representatives in such measures.

With reference to the suggested information session, he wondered whether any form of assessment could be undertaken, since the old arrangements had continued in force until so recently and their effects would therefore distort any picture provided of the new arrangements.

He also noted with approval that UNDP was considering a new arrangement whereby its country offices would have authority to approve project components. He hoped that the arrangement would be approved since, in his view, the delegation of responsibility for all project components to the resident representative would be of considerable benefit to the efficiency of the system as a whole.

Mr. MATTHEWS (United Nations Development Programme) said, in response to the comment by the President, that the system under consideration, which was already being put into effect, was an intermediate one between the former project-by-project approach and the approach of wholesale approval of entire country programmes. UNDP was not prepared to pass full authority for

(Mr. Matthews, UNDP)

approval of all programme components to the field level once a country programme had been approved. First, field representatives were invited to inform UNDP of the specific needs of the various areas of concentration, for the preparation of an overall assessment. Once that assessment had been completed and UNDP had fulfilled various policy requirements, authority could be passed to the country level for the subsequent approval of specific components.

From a schematic point of view, programming went through three stages. First, a country programme was considered, containing a broad indication of the national programmes for which UNDP support was proposed. Second, an initial national programme outline was developed, still at headquarters level, to ensure that the programme would be fully in line with the concerns of the governing body. Third, and finally, the individual components and projects were approved at the field level.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) agreed with the President that any attempt to evaluate the new system during the General Assembly, when it would effectively have been in operation for a mere three months, would be very difficult and, in view of the workload during the General Assembly, barely feasible. He therefore recommended that the secretariat might prepare a non-paper, summarizing the issues and the proposals made during the debate, and taking into account the context in which statements were made.

Mr. DEMONGEOT (United States of America) agreed with the representative of the United Kingdom that the workload under the triennial review precluded the preparation of another assessment, and suggested that, as an alternative, the UNDP secretariat might organize a consultation at some point later in the year, to review progress in implementing the new support cost arrangements.

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan) said, with reference to the suggestions by the United Kingdom and the United States, that it would be more appropriate to organize merely an informal briefing on the support costs arrangements, rather than consultations in the context of the Economic and Social Council, which would be expected to lead to decisions.

Mr. MATTHEWS (United Nations Development Programme) said that a core group had been set up under UNDP on the subject of the new support costs. It would meet regularly to review experience in their implementation and could give briefings to members, as suggested by the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that it had been the understanding of the Group that no non-paper would result from the discussions on support costs and that it would in any event be premature to attempt any kind of summary in 1992, the year of the triennial review, when the process had only just begun. Furthermore, a summary would be influenced by the views of the person presenting it, and the only acceptable record would, therefore, be a full verbatim record of all the deliberations.

Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) said that, in view of the opposition to his suggestion expressed by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77, he would like to withdraw the suggestion.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.

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Substantive session of 1992

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 32nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 20 July 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

CONTENTS

Human rights questions

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (continued)

Revitalization of the Economic and Social Council

Establishment of new subsidiary bodies of the Council

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (E/1992/22, E/1992/23 and Add.1, E/1992/103; A/47/41)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take a decision on the 10 draft resolutions and 40 draft decisions recommended to it for adoption by the Social Committee. The texts of draft resolutions I to VII were contained in the report of the Commission on Human Rights on its forty-eighth session (E/1992/22, chap. I). Those of draft resolutions VIII to X were contained in the report of the Social Committee (E/1992/103). The texts of the draft decisions were contained in document E/1992/22, except for those of draft decisions IX, XXXVI and XXXVIII to XL, which were contained in document E/1992/103, and of decisions XXXV and XXXVII, which appeared in the report of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/1992/23). There were no programme budget implications before the Council in connection with the adoption of the draft resolutions presented in the Commission's report. He reminded members of the Council that, in accordance with the Council's standard practice, any observer delegations wishing to make statements should do so before the Council had taken action on a proposal rather than when members of the Council might wish to speak in explanation of vote.

Draft resolution I

The PRESIDENT recalled that the Social Committee had adopted draft resolution I by 31 votes to 16, with 4 abstentions, in a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was taken on draft resolution I.

In favour: Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Guinea, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Kuwait, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Pakistan, Philippines, Rwanda, Somalia, Suriname, Swaziland, Trinidad and Tobago, Yugoslavia, Zaire.

Against: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining: Argentina, Belarus, Russian Federation.

Draft resolution I was adopted by 29 votes to 17, with 3 abstentions.

Mr. KUEHL (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his country had been constantly in the forefront of opposition to apartheid and been heartened by the recent irreversible steps towards its eradication in South Africa. At such a time, it served no constructive purpose for bodies such as the Commission and the Council to persist in the inflammatory responses of the past. The current difficulties made it all the more important for international bodies to encourage all the parties concerned to return to the negotiating table; unbalanced resolutions of the sort just adopted would do nothing to improve matters.

Mr. BURCUOĞLU (Turkey) said that his delegation had voted against draft resolution I, whose text failed to reflect the evolution of the situation in South Africa. Turkey would continue its efforts towards achieving the goal of a non-racial society in South Africa.

Mr. JAAFARI (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, had his delegation been present during the voting, it would have voted in favour of draft resolution I.

Mr. LAZARO (Peru) said that his delegation, too, had it been present at the time, would have voted in favour.

Mr. OUTLULE (Botswana) said that his delegation had voted in favour of draft resolution I in the Social Committee, and would have done so at the current meeting had it been present at the time of the vote. It reiterated, however, that it reserved its position in regard to paragraph 5.

Draft resolution II

Draft resolution II was adopted.

Mr. BURCUOĞLU (Turkey) said that his delegation had joined the consensus in the adoption of draft resolution II and had taken an active part in preparing the draft declaration concerned (E/CN.4/1992/48 and Corr.1,

(Mr. Burcuoğlu, Turkey)

annex I), but it felt that the failure to define the term "minority" could lead to confusion. Turkey, therefore, would interpret its rights and obligations pursuant to the draft declaration in the light of bilateral or international agreements in which the status of minorities was clearly defined.

A further textual shortcoming was the failure to mention the principle of political unity of States, a concept which should supplement those such as territorial integrity and political independence.

Draft resolution III

Draft resolution III was adopted.

Mr. BURCUOĞLU (Turkey) said that his delegation had participated actively in the working group referred to in draft resolution III, and that a number of its proposals had been adopted. Unfortunately, its proposal that the text should refer to measures to prevent international terrorism, as set forth in General Assembly resolution 40/61, had not been adopted. His delegation reserved its position, therefore, in regard to the text of the draft declaration.

Ms. FENG Cui (China) said that her delegation had stated its position on draft resolution III in the Social Committee.

Draft resolutions IV to X

Draft resolutions IV to X were adopted.

Draft decisions I to IX

Draft decisions I to IX were adopted.

Ms. MEHTA (India) said that her delegation had been unable to join the consensus on the text of draft decision IX adopted in the Social Committee. It would surely have been more appropriate for the Council simply to take note of the recommendations contained in the report of the International Workshop, since doing more than that was going to give the recommendations the unwarranted status of a body of principles arrived at through a true intergovernmental process, whereas many countries, including her own, had not been invited to participate in the Workshop. Her delegation would reiterate that view when the matter came to be discussed in the General Assembly. In any case, the structure and functions of national institutions

(Ms. Mehta, India)

were matters to be governed by national competence alone; there could be no single set of standards in that regard, and the text in question could serve only as an illustration.

Ms. FENG Cui (China) said that her delegation had already expressed its reservations on draft decision IX in the Social Committee; it was not satisfied with certain parts of Commission on Human Rights resolution 1992/54, especially the annex, which contained a number of complex principles whose enunciation in a single set of standards would be very difficult and called for further study. China had not been invited to participate in the International Workshop, in which the recommendations had been drafted only by a small number of experts and therefore did not have the status of a text suitable for adoption by the General Assembly.

Draft decision X

Draft decision X was adopted.

Draft decision XI

Mr. MIN (Observer for Myanmar) said that he wished to reiterate his Government's position that the decision in question was unacceptable and his delegation dissociated itself from it.

Draft decision XI was adopted.

Draft decision XII

The PRESIDENT said that the Social Committee had adopted draft decision XII by 25 votes to 4, with 23 abstentions, in a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was taken on draft decision XII.

In favour: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Morocco, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Against: Angola, China, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Syrian Arab Republic.

Abstaining: Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Ecuador, Guinea, India, Jamaica, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda, Somalia, Swaziland, Trinidad and Tobago, Yugoslavia, Zaire.

Draft decision XII was adopted by 24 votes to 4, with 23 abstentions.

Mr. MORA GODOY (Observer for Cuba) said that his delegation did not accept the decision and would not abide by it.

Draft decisions XIII to XV

Draft decisions XIII to XV were adopted.

Mr. OULIA (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation had not participated in the action taken on draft decision XV because the decision was based on a Commission on Human Rights resolution which his delegation had voted against and which did not reflect the actual human rights situation in his country or the spirit of cooperation his country had displayed.

Draft decision XVI

Draft decision XVI was adopted.

Draft decision XVII

Mr. ALI (Observer for Iraq) said that Iraq's decision to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights had been based on its desire for constructive dialogue with a view to overcoming the difficulties and misunderstandings surrounding the human rights situation in the country. The authorities had cooperated fully with the Special Rapporteur during his visit in January 1992, allowing him to visit any locations he wished and facilitating contacts with senior Government officials. However, the Special Rapporteur's report was neither impartial nor objective. His aim had been to blame the country and distort its image as part of a campaign waged by certain countries. The report contained lies, fabrications and propaganda and revealed a bias on the part of the Special Rapporteur, who had departed from his mandate and sought deliberately to denigrate the country, instead of contributing to a constructive dialogue aimed at resolving outstanding problems. Iraq categorically rejected the lies and falsifications contained in the report, but reaffirmed its willingness to cooperate fully with the Commission on Human Rights.

Draft decision XVII was adopted.

Draft decisions XVIII to XXVIII

Draft decisions XVIII to XXVIII were adopted.

Draft decision XXIX

Mr. SERRATE (Observer for Bolivia) said that in draft decisions XXIX and XXXI the English expression "indigenous peoples" had been translated into Spanish by the words "poblaciones indígenas". The word "población" was ambiguous and had urban connotations. Besides, it had previously been agreed that the word "pueblos" should be used. He requested that the texts in question should be corrected accordingly.

The PRESIDENT said he would ask the Secretariat to make any necessary corrections.

Draft decision XXIX was adopted.

Draft decisions XXX to XXXVII

Draft decisions XXX to XXXVII were adopted.

Mr. KUEHL (United States of America) said that his delegation had joined the consensus on draft decisions XXXV and XXXVII but strongly believed that, in the current era of budgetary constraints and limited resources, the United Nations should attempt to streamline its activities to ensure that key objectives were accomplished without resort to endless calls for additional resources. Nevertheless, he recognized that the workload of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had increased significantly following the accession of new States parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and that the Committee faced an extensive backlog of reports. However, imaginative and cost-effective ways must be found to deal with the increased workload. He noted that an additional appropriation had been projected to cover the holding of the extraordinary session, and he urged the Secretary-General to seek to cover that amount from existing resources.

With regard to decision XXXVII, his delegation felt that it was not appropriate to fund technical assistance from the assessed budgets, but had joined the consensus on that decision in a spirit of cooperation.

Draft decisions XXXVIII and XXXIX

Draft decisions XXXVIII and XXXIX were adopted.

Draft decision XL

Mr. TENNE (Observer for Israel) said that he wished to comment on the adoption of draft decision XL concerning the report of the Commission on Human Rights on its forty-eighth session.

The various resolutions adopted by the Commission on that occasion with regard to Israel had been, by and large, repetitions of the same old and tired lies, recycled year after year by a politicized body whose implacable hostility was nothing new. The tone and content of the resolutions were therefore hardly surprising. What was regrettable, however, was the abuse of the Commission's time and agenda to further purely political ends which had little to do with its real and important tasks.

Since the lies, half-truths and distortions so rife in those resolutions had already been rebutted in detail by his delegation at the forty-eighth session of the Commission, there was no need to repeat its comments. He wished to voice his delegation's strong disapproval of the resolutions contained in the Commission's report. It could not but observe with incredulity the attempt by some delegations at the current session of the Council to transform the debate in the Social Committee on human rights into a repeat performance of the Commission's session. The persistence shown by representatives whose own Governments' record on human rights filled volumes of unspeakable horror, in lecturing Israel on the subject bordered on the absurd, and did not deserve a reply. It was to the other members of the Council, who had recently debated in earnest the urgent need for its reform, that his delegation directed its observation on the need to weigh carefully the wisdom of adopting decisions and resolutions automatically without regard to their veracity, objectivity or balance.

Draft decision XL was adopted.

Mr. KOMISSAROV (Belarus), referring to the resolutions and decisions contained in the report of the Social Committee, said that, by virtue of the adoption of the Declaration on State Sovereignty of the Republic of Belarus on 27 July 1990 and the subsequent conferment of constitutional status on the Declaration by the Supreme Council of Belarus on 25 August 1991, the principle of respect for, and the observance of, human rights had become one of the

(Mr. Komissarov, Belarus)

fundamental principles of the domestic and foreign policy of Belarus. The new approach to human rights issues was clearly demonstrated, in particular, by the special declaration by his country's delegation at the founding of the Commonwealth of Independent States, in which it affirmed, firstly, that all States must undertake to respect the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments, and also the rights of national minorities; and secondly, that all disputes must be settled by peaceful means through negotiations. Strict compliance with those principles was regarded as a prerequisite for membership of the Commonwealth. The declaration had subsequently been adopted as an official document of the Commonwealth.

The Supreme Council of Belarus had taken a decision on accession to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and on recognition of the competence of the Human Rights Committee under article 41 of the Covenant, and the relevant document would be forwarded to the Secretariat in the near future for registration. Furthermore, in 1992 his country had become a full member of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, with all the human rights obligations that membership entailed. Those developments testified to his country's determination to defend human rights, irrespective of the ideological situation, to eschew double standards, to pursue its cooperation with the organs and structures of the United Nations and other international organizations and with individual States and to endeavour to promote full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It was against that background that his delegation had supported the recommendations and decisions just adopted.

The PRESIDENT said that the Council had thus concluded its consideration of item 17, on human rights questions.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued) (E/1992/63, 90 and 99)

REVITALIZATION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (E/1992/86 and 101)

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE COUNCIL (E/1992/76)

The PRESIDENT said that, since the three items were being considered as a cluster, delegations might make comments on any one or all of the items in the cluster.

Mr. STRONG (Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) said that the agreements reached at the Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which had recently been held at Rio de Janeiro, represented a remarkable achievement by any standard, despite the fact that they had not met all hopes and expectations.

What had been achieved, particularly in respect of Agenda 21, represented the most comprehensive and far-ranging programme of action ever agreed by the world community, and at the highest possible political level. Together, the Declaration adopted at the Conference and Agenda 21 represented the basic foundations for a new partnership embracing rich and poor and North, South, East and West.

The results had been greatly facilitated and reinforced by an unprecedented manifestation of public concern in the form of the participation of vast numbers of non-governmental organizations and citizens' groups representing virtually all major constituencies and sectors of society in the preparations for the Conference, in the Conference itself, and at the Global Forum which had accompanied it. The interest and attention of people throughout the world had been engaged as never before through the record number of media covering the Conference.

The fact that the Earth Summit, the largest gathering of heads of State or Government ever held, had been convened by the United Nations was of profound significance. There was a recognition that the United Nations provided the only forum in which the world community could unite to pursue the achievement of the common good, and many countries, particularly developing countries and countries in transition, now looked to the United Nations to assist them in implementing the results of the Conference.

(Mr. Strong)

Although fundamental principles had been agreed, they would have to be translated into concrete action. In particular, programmes must be implemented, new treaties elaborated and put into force, and existing treaties strengthened. In addition, practical steps must be taken to provide access to technologies and to mobilize new and additional financial resources for countries most in need of them, as was called for in Agenda 21.

A number of important recommendations contained in Agenda 21 related to the role of the Economic and Social Council in the context of the entire system of the United Nations. Those recommendations provided an opportunity to activate, for the first time, the potential of the Council as envisaged in the Charter. In particular, the recommendation to establish a high-level commission on sustainable development under Article 68 of the Charter could contribute significantly to strengthening the role of the Organization in the interrelated fields of protecting the Earth's environment and enhancing global development. It would, of course, be for the forthcoming forty-seventh session of the General Assembly to determine specific procedural and organizational modalities for the commission, and the Secretary-General was currently preparing a report for the Assembly on such arrangements, as well as other matters related to the institutional follow-up to the Conference.

Agenda 21 was not a definitive prescription for remedying the ills of the planet. Rather, it was a framework for cooperation among Governments and the many other institutions and sectors of society that must be committed to its implementation in order to effect the transition to sustainable development. Its 115 programme areas did provide the essential ingredients for that transition within a framework that would facilitate the continuing process of cooperation, coordination, review and revision.

In order to carry out its role effectively, the primary intergovernmental mechanism recommended by the Conference - the proposed commission on sustainable development - should be constituted as the focal point of intergovernmental decision-making in order to achieve the integration of the environmental and developmental goals outlined in Agenda 21 at the national, regional and global levels. It must also provide a forum for the review,

(Mr. Strong)

further development and updating of Agenda 21 in the light of future economic, financial, technological, legal and other developments, thus maintaining the political momentum of the Earth Summit. Provision must be made for the active participation in its work of all components of the United Nations system, financial institutions and other entities both inside and outside the system, and representatives of the non-governmental organizations sector, in order to ensure coordination with Governments in an evolving global partnership for sustainable development. One of the first tasks would be for Governments to translate Agenda 21 into their own national Agendas 21; for the same to be done at other levels of government; and for each institution to adopt its own Agenda 21.

He was accordingly greatly encouraged that, on the initiative of the Secretary-General, the Administrative Committee on Coordination had already established an ad hoc task force to review the implications of the decisions taken at Rio, particularly in respect of Agenda 21, for inter-agency cooperation, thus providing a timely opportunity for rationalizing and consolidating existing programme review and coordinating mechanisms in line with the overall movement towards restructuring and greater effectiveness.

Implementation of Agenda 21 within the United Nations system must be organized under the leadership of the Secretary-General and within the overall framework of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, which was chaired by the Secretary-General. The United Nations would also benefit by coordination arrangements to permit further participation of representatives of other international and regional, economic and technical cooperation agencies outside the United Nations system, such as regional development banks.

The follow-up to the Conference would also require adequate and competent secretariat support. The secretariat to be established to support the work of the commission on sustainable development and inter-agency coordination would of necessity be small. Since it would have neither funds to administer nor authority over the organizations, agencies and programmes with which it worked, it would have to have a strong mandate, a high-level status and the highest possible professional quality if it was to win the respect and enlist the full cooperation of the other organizations on which the process of

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follow-up and implementation depended. It should therefore not be integrated into, or subordinated to, any part of the United Nations which had substantive programme and operating functions that might be seen as competitive by the other organizations involved in the process. There was no need for the secretariat structure to be large in size or costly: the experience gained during the preparations for the Earth Summit showed that a relatively small core staff, reinforced by the full and active involvement of the United Nations and other organizations, could be very effective. The new secretariat arrangements to be decided by the General Assembly at its forthcoming session would need to incorporate and build on the experience and expertise of the Conference. It was of the utmost importance that, in the current transitional period, the capacity of the Conference secretariat be maintained at a level at which the secretariat could provide adequate continuity between the UNCED process and its implementation.

One of the most critical issues addressed at the Conference had been how the needs of the developing countries for the new and additional financial resources required to support their implementation of Agenda 21 were to be met. That issue would prove to be the key to the ultimate realization of the results of the Conference. At the Earth Summit, developed countries had reaffirmed their commitment to reach the accepted target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance and to augment their aid programmes in order to reach that target as soon as possible - in the case of some countries, by the year 2000. That affirmation by the developed countries must be spelled out in terms of specific commitments to ensure that enhanced aid flows to developed countries were predictable and could provide a sound basis for long-term planning. Unfortunately, the financial commitments made by some Governments, and the encouraging indications from others, added up at best only to a small proportion of what the developing countries would require to achieve the transition to sustainable development. Agenda 21 proposed the use of all available funding sources and mechanisms, including the International Development Association (IDA). Special consideration should be given to the proposal by the World Bank for an "Earth increment" to the tenth replenishment of IDA. The

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provision of additional funding through IDA, particularly for anti-poverty programmes and related areas of sustainable development, was vital for the effective fulfilment of Agenda 21.

The mechanisms endorsed in Agenda 21 included the Global Environment Facility. Arrangements should now be finalized for the proposed restructuring of that facility, including provision for universal and democratic participation, transparency, flexibility in expanding its scope and coverage, and predictability in the flow of funds without new forms of conditionality.

The recommendations contained in Agenda 21 in respect of debt relief should be translated promptly into specific commitments, and it was important that the future programme of the commission on sustainable development include timely consideration of innovative methods of financing. Agenda 21 also accorded special importance to capacity-building in developing countries and the need to provide new financial resources through the United Nations Development Programme for that purpose.

Of course, no one could reasonably expect all the financial resources required to be forthcoming immediately, particularly in view of the severe financial constraints which most Governments were currently experiencing. What was needed was a substantial and credible first step in mobilizing those resources and an ongoing process that promised substantial further increments over a reasonable period.

Agenda 21 recommended that developed countries, and others in a position to do so, should make initial financial commitments to give effect to the decisions of the Conference and to report on such plans and commitments to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. It would be desirable for a meeting of donors to be convened as soon as possible, and preferably before the end of the forthcoming General Assembly session, for that purpose.

Agenda 21 included a mandate for review and monitoring of the flows of financial resources, which should be systematically combined with a review of the availability of financial resources. The mandate was clear, and what was needed was an equally clear institutional mechanism to give it credible effect. The mechanism for that would need to be put in place as an essential feature of the institutional follow-up to the Conference and of the

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implementation of its decisions. That could be facilitated through provision for a high-level consultative panel as part of, or related to, the commission on sustainable development.

Mr. STOBY (Director, Economic and Social Council Affairs and Inter-Agency Coordination Division, Department of Economic and Social Development), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council (E/1992/86), said that although a number of the revitalization measures had proved to be of lasting value, others had turned out to be impractical, while some had not yet been followed up by the Council.

With respect to measures of lasting value, the Secretary-General was of the view that the establishment of a multi-year programme of major policy themes was an important innovation. In that connection enough advance notice must be provided so that the reports required for the Council's annual review of major policy themes could be prepared. The themes for the coordination segment, at the least, should continue to derive from a multi-year work programme.

The practice of electing the Bureau of the Council early in the year, before the organizational session, had also proved its worth. Consideration should be given to how to further utilize the Bureau inter-sessionally.

In the category of impractical measures were the proposals to obtain a useful output from the Council's annual general discussion, which member States had already decided to dispense with. The challenge now was to organize the Council's work in such a way that the general discussion did not re-emerge under another guise, particularly in the high-level segment. Further, the Council should review the arrangements for joint meetings of the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Administrative Committee on Coordination so that decisions could be taken on the future functioning of that mechanism.

Among valid but unimplemented measures was the monitoring by the Economic and Social Council of the strategies, policies and priorities established by the General Assembly and the Council itself. The Council's monitoring responsibilities should be enhanced in some areas. Further, the Council

(Mr. Stoby)

should decide whether the number of items on its agenda, the number of reports submitted to it and the number of bodies reporting to it were compatible with its revitalization goals.

Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the conditions necessary for the effective functioning of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit (E/1992/63), he said that the level of resources available to the Unit remained the same as at its inception, even though its workload had increased enormously over the years. In that connection it should be noted that the entire context of the relationship between the Council and non-governmental organizations might need to be reviewed as a consequence of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which had witnessed the participation of thousands of activists not previously engaged in the work of the United Nations. Further, the Conference had called for participation by non-governmental organizations in the implementation of Agenda 21 and in the work of the proposed commission on sustainable development, which would be a subsidiary organ of the Council.

Introducing the note by the Secretary-General on the proposed consolidated mandates of the new subsidiary bodies of the Council (E/1992/76), he said that the item on science and technology for sustainable development in the agenda of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development had been reworded to reflect the implications of the Conference on Environment and Development. Given that science and technology constituted an interdisciplinary area, a coherent approach was essential. The Committee on Natural Resources would be reorganized, and would focus on water resources and mineral resources. The question of energy resources would be transferred to the new Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, which would be called upon to address the important links between environment and development in the energy sector while promoting the use of new and renewable sources of energy.

Ms. SUNDBOM (Sweden) said that the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit served as the secretariat of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, which must be provided with appropriate support in order to fulfil its mandate. The Unit served as the focal point for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status, which were expected to number

(Ms. Sundbom, Sweden)

1,000 during 1993. The field of activities of non-governmental organizations was ever-expanding, as were their contributions to United Nations activities. In that connection, NGO participation in United Nations conferences should be handled by the Unit.

The Unit also acted as a focal point for matters relating to consultative status and as such was the repository for information on the activities of all non-governmental organizations in consultative status. The Unit needed resources to build a comprehensive data bank in order to respond to the increasing demands of Member States for information.

Both the Secretary-General and Member States were aware of the need for greater cooperation with non-governmental organizations at a system-wide level, a point raised during the Council's coordination segment. The suggestion that the Council might engage in a direct dialogue with NGOs could be accommodated through the enlargement of the annual consultation between NGOs and the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations in connection with the next session of the Economic and Social Council. Consideration should be given to drafting proposals that would promote a regular and fruitful dialogue that would supplement the interaction that took place by virtue of consultative status.

While the report of the Secretary-General (E/1992/63) was welcome, it did not offer any clear recommendation for action or any indication of the resources needed by the Unit to cope with its workload. Her delegation held the view that short-term measures were needed to ensure that the Unit could discharge its responsibilities effectively.

In the long term, the capacity of the Unit should be analysed from the perspective of its ability to advise non-governmental organizations applying for consultative status; to set up a computerized data bank; to organize regular briefing sessions; to handle NGO participation in United Nations conferences; to exchange information with other United Nations offices; to promote a direct dialogue between Member States and non-governmental organizations; to provide the services needed by non-governmental organizations in consultative status; and to assist NGOs in the coordination of their activities and in making a substantive contribution to the work of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

For participants only

E/1992/SR.33
28 July 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Substantive session for 1992

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 33rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 20 July 1992, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. MROZIEWICZ	(Poland)
later:	Mr. GUERRERO (Vice-President)	(Philippines)

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Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (continued)

Revitalization of the Economic and Social Council (continued)

Establishment of new subsidiary bodies of the Council (continued)

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The meeting was called to order 3.20 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued) (E/1992/63, E/1992/90, E/1992/99)

REVITALIZATION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (E/1992/86, E/1992/101 and Corr.1)

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE COUNCIL (E/1992/76) (continued)

Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil) asked what steps had been taken to reform the Global Environment Facility and to arrange for the pledging conference envisaged at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held at Rio de Janeiro.

Mr. MALONE (Canada) said that the proposed Commission on Sustainable Development should comprise no more than 54 members and should be established as soon as possible, preferably by the spring of 1993. As a subsidiary body of the Council, its decisions would be reviewed annually by the General Assembly. The tasks entrusted to the Commission should be pragmatic and achievable and there should be flexibility in setting its agenda to ensure that priority issues were covered and that all of Agenda 21 was examined over a period of, for example, five years.

Participation by non-governmental organizations and scientific input would be the key to the Commission's success. The Commission should examine global, regional and national efforts - the latter through reports from countries - to implement Agenda 21 and the problems and challenges faced in meeting the objectives established at Rio. There should be high-level political involvement in the Commission, and Government ministers should attend part of the annual sessions. Delegations and the Secretariat should work closely in the planning stages. The special task force established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) would benefit from regular consultations with permanent representatives.

(Mr. Malone, Canada)

At its forty-seventh session the General Assembly should consider the following questions: composition and structure of the Commission, including the manner in which members and Chairman would be selected, role and status of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, and subsidiary bodies, if any. The General Assembly should also discuss the Commission's mandate; its agenda-setting methods; the leadership, composition and location of its secretariat and the Commission's relationship with United Nations agencies and their programmes as well as with negotiations on relevant international agreements. Lastly, the General Assembly should link the discussion of the Commission to the mandates and operations of the new subsidiary bodies of the Council.

Mr. MARKS (United States of America) said that the central purpose of the Commission was to provide an intergovernmental forum for the exchange of information on national and multilateral experiences in implementing the decisions adopted at Rio and for the discussion of global, regional and, where appropriate, national trends and key issues in the integration of environment and development. That process should include a review of the efforts of the United Nations system, particularly at the regional level, to implement Agenda 21. The contributions of international financial institutions, including the regional multilateral banks, should be encouraged to the maximum extent feasible. It was also important to ensure the active involvement of non-governmental organizations and the business and scientific communities.

Overall effectiveness and efficiency would be enhanced by the establishment of a separate unit within the Secretariat headed by a senior official, probably at the Assistant Secretary-General level. The unit should provide the support staff for the new Commission and whatever ACC coordinating mechanism was established. The location of the Commission and its support staff and its links to the rest of the United Nations system would be critical to the success of follow-up activities. The two realistic options for the Commission's headquarters were Geneva and New York.

Delegations to the Commission should comprise responsible policy makers and also senior technical experts. The Commission should give priority to

(Mr. Marks, United States)

information from States regarding their national experience in carrying out the recommendations of the Rio Conference. That process would be greatly facilitated by a well-focused agenda which addressed appropriate portions of Agenda 21 at each session, leading to sequential consideration of the entire outline for action over a period of perhaps five years.

Lastly, since the mandates of the new Commission on Science and Technology for Development, and of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and the Committee on Natural Resources had been established prior to the decision to establish a Commission on Sustainable Development, they must be reviewed and approved, if indeed those bodies were to continue to exist at all. He invited the Secretary-General of the Conference to comment on the relationship between all those bodies on the overall question of environment and development.

Mr. MONGBE (Benin) said that it would not be appropriate for the Council to engage in a substantive discussion of the Commission on Sustainable Development; that task would fall to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. With regard to paragraph 38.11 of Agenda 21, he inquired what interim secretariat arrangements had been made. He also wondered when delegations could expect to receive a report by the Secretary-General, regarding secretariat arrangements for the Commission.

Mr. MARTIN (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its Member States, asked about the nature and number of reports to be prepared as a follow-up to the Conference, particularly with respect to the Commission on Sustainable Development and expressed the hope that they would be ready sufficiently in advance for delegations to consider them thoroughly at the General Assembly.

Mr. STRONG (Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development), replying to the various questions, said that it was his understanding that work was proceeding in accordance with the decisions adopted at Rio on the following issues of concern to developing countries regarding the reform of the Global Environment Facility: the universality of its membership and the terms on which membership was available; the transparency of its activities; the nature of its mandate; the

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extent to which its funding of measures provided for in international conventions involved it in final decisions on such measures; the extent to which activities other than those arising under international conventions might be eligible for Facility funding and the conditions for such opportunities; and the nature of the ongoing relationship between the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme.

As to the idea of a pledging conference, it would seem appropriate, in the light of the decisions adopted at Rio, for those countries which had made commitments at Rio to define them more specifically within the framework of a meeting along the lines of a pledging conference.

With regard to the relationship between the proposed new subsidiary bodies of the Council and the proposed Commission on Sustainable Development, it seemed essential, in view of the importance of science and technology and new and renewable sources of energy for sustainable development, that the relationship between the mandates of those bodies should be clearly prescribed.

As to the interim arrangements for inter-agency coordination, he emphasized that the establishment of the ACC task force was a purely temporary arrangement intended to facilitate an early and timely response to the new requirements for inter-agency coordination and cooperation. Once the task force completed its work, it would seem logical for adjustments to be made in the institutional arrangements to accommodate the decisions adopted at Rio.

As to the question of interim secretariat arrangements pending the adoption of arrangements at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly, he recalled that the 22 Professional posts allocated to the Conference secretariat by the regular budget had had to be increased threefold through secondment and with extrabudgetary resources. If those additional posts were lost during the interim period and the Conference staff was then further reduced, the capacity to ensure quality follow-up to the Conference would be significantly impaired.

With regard to the number and nature of the reports to be provided to the General Assembly, he said that the main report would be the report of the Secretary-General called for in paragraph 38.12 of Agenda 21 concerning the

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organizational modalities for the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The information requested on the proposed high-level advisory body and on staffing could be covered in that same report. He expected that it would be available in a timely fashion.

Mr. CHIRILA (Romania) requested further clarification of the proposed high-level advisory body.

Mr. EHLERS (Observer for Uruguay) wondered how, in practical terms the Commission on Sustainable Development could be the focal point of intergovernmental decision-making and also the principal forum for Agenda 21 implementation at the local, regional and gloabl levels.

Mr. MANZ (Observer for Switzerland) said that the follow-up to the Rio Conference posed a major challenge for the United Nations system. The proposed Commission on Sustainable Development should reinforce current efforts to restructure the economic and social activities of the United Nations and should be a forum for the exchange of information and experiences on national, regional and international policies relating to the follow-up of Agenda 21. Ultimately, it should define overall United Nations policy in the area of environment and development.

The Commission should meet annually for a period of two to three weeks and involve concerned non-governmental organizations (NGOs), scientific and the business circles in its work. The meetings should be held in Geneva, which had a responsible and active scientific community and where a great number of countries already maintained permanent missions. His Government therefore formally renewed its offer to host the secretariat of the Commission in Geneva and expressed its readiness to facilitate the establishment of the secretariat by providing the necessary infrastructure free of charge.

Mr. LICHEM (Austria) wondered what would be the relationship between the Commission's review function and the Economic and Social Council's coordination and policy role. Noting that reviewing 180 national reports would be a very time-consuming process, he suggested that there should be a system of sectoral or regional reviews, which would also enhance the role and responsibilities of the regional commissions.

(Mr. Lichem, Austria)

Secondly, noting that the secretariat's workload was bound to increase, since implementation required more staff than planning, he wondered whether funding would keep pace with the increasing workload. He also wondered what the relationship would be between the Commission and the financial institutions and what provision would be made for review of the funding.

Finally, since the Commission would also have a policy function, his delegation could foresee a possible conflict with the Commission's subsidiary role in relation to the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Guerrero (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. STRONG (Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development), responding to the representative of Romania, said that the high-level advisory body he had in mind would be a group of eminent persons acting in their individual capacities such as had assisted in the preparations for UNCED. It might meet regularly for two or three years or on an ad hoc basis.

An extraordinarily rich array of resources was available for implementing Agenda 21: inputs to UNCED, national reports, sectoral analyses and the like. To review that material it would be necessary to take advantage of the expertise available within the United Nations system and outside, namely, from Governments and NGOs. Since the Commission's secretariat would be small, it would have to command the highest degree of respect and enlist the support of the various entities with which it worked.

His earlier statement that the Commission should be the main focal point followed from its role as an intergovernmental body. In order to do its job it must draw upon the continuing contributions of many agencies and must be seen by them as the focal point for the continuing review and evolution of Agenda 21. It must also be able to reach out to them in cooperative arrangements.

The offer by Switzerland to host the secretariat was most generous and Geneva would, indeed, be a very appropriate location; however, a very active presence would also be necessary in New York.

The relationship between the role of the Commission in implementing Agenda 21 and the function of the Economic and Social Council was a complex

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one. The Commission's review of Agenda 21 would be quite time-consuming and should be done in such a way as to facilitate the Council's work. The reviews themselves should be conducted on a national and regional basis; such exercises were already routinely carried out by the regional economic commissions. The representative of Austria was no doubt right to be concerned that tasks undertaken in support of the Commission would increase demands on the secretariat; however, he personally felt that the United Nations system could and would respond.

The relationship between the Commission and the financial institutions would be an interactive one. The financial institutions would certainly not take instructions from the Commission, but its policy review could not be effective unless it was undertaken in close consultation with those institutions. The United Nations system could influence the financial institutions to the extent that the latter respected the guidance provided by the Commission.

Regarding the concern that the Commission's future-oriented functions might usurp the role of the Economic and Social Council, he pointed out that while there was an element of policy-making, Governments had certainly intended the Commission to provide useful guidance. It would not dictate but merely illuminate the future, pointing up issues that should influence Governments' thinking.

Mr. KAARIA (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, agreed that the Rio Conference had on the whole been a remarkable success. The implementation of Agenda 21 and the integration of development and environmental concerns must take place at the local, national and regional levels with the support of the entire United Nations system. In order to ensure effectiveness, such support must be decentralized and flexible. The Commission on Sustainable Development was essential in order to provide guidance and coordination throughout the system and maintain the momentum achieved. In revitalizing the Council, account should be taken of the decisions by the Conference, particularly since the Commission would report to the Council. The Nordic countries underscored the need to ensure the financing necessary to implement those decisions and the Commission's important role with respect to their financial aspects.

Mr. KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, stressed that the General Assembly was the principal policy-making and evaluation body with regard to the follow-up to the Rio Conference. Within the framework of the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development had a specific role to play in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of Agenda 21. In that connection, he stressed that the three new subsidiary bodies, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, had specific functions that could not in any way be assumed by the Commission on Sustainable Development. The work of those bodies must begin as soon as possible, particularly since the General Assembly had taken a decision to that effect. Lastly, he inquired whether any initial contacts had been made for the pledging conference to be held before the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

Mr. SERRATE (Observer for Bolivia) stressed the need to maintain the political momentum generated by the Rio Conference. Sustainable development had been recognized as a basic principle guiding the activities of the United Nations system. The secretariat of the Commission should be a small, well-defined body with high-level representation. The Commission should not compete with other bodies and should assume the general leadership role in the field of sustainable development. Lastly, his delegation, like many others, felt the need for the ongoing presence of Mr. Strong, who was an indispensable link between the developed and developing countries, in order to maintain the spirit of the Rio Conference.

Mr. GORELIK (Russian Federation) said that the recommendations put forward by Mr. Strong encouraged the hope that it would be possible to establish a forum for implementing the decisions taken at the Rio Conference. In that connection, it was essential to ensure clear coordination of the work of all international organizations both within and outside the United Nations system in implementing Agenda 21. He stressed that the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development should be a small, independent sub-division, which should make maximum use of the expertise of the Conference

(Mr. Gorelik, Russian Federation)

secretariat and be financed through savings achieved during the current reform of the United Nations Secretariat. It should be headed by a high-level official, who would report directly to the Secretary-General, and would carry out the important function of coordinating system-wide measures to implement the decisions taken at the Rio Conference and Agenda 21. Lastly, he inquired what Mr. Strong had meant by the broad-based review of the relationship between the Council and non-governmental organizations.

Ms. DOWSETT (Observer for New Zealand) agreed that the impetus generated by the Rio Conference must be maintained. The participatory process created by the Conference should be reflected in the operations of the Commission on Sustainable Development. She stressed the need to ensure the best possible interaction with non-governmental organizations in the fields of business, industry, environment and development, indigenous people and various other groups, such as those in the scientific and technological sectors. The Commission's activities should be open to the widest possible involvement on the part of the members of the international community. The Commission should also benefit from the participation and scrutiny of as many countries as possible and its meetings should be organized in such a way as to achieve that objective.

Mr. STRONG (Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) said that there had been no initial contacts or initiatives with regard to the pledging conference. Although his responsibilities would end when his contract expired in August, his commitment to the United Nations and the cause of sustainable development would continue.

The current arrangements governing accreditation of non-governmental organizations were frankly inadequate. The nature of such organizations and their relationship to the United Nations had changed immensely over the years, partly due to the tremendous proliferation of such organizations in developing countries. Many of them functioned on a less formal basis than those accredited to the Council and although some of them might not wish to be accredited to the Council, their contribution to United Nations activities was absolutely essential.

(Mr. Strong)

A number of non-governmental organizations in the environmental field had budgets greater than that of UNEP. In the area of development, there was a vast amount of human and financial resources at the disposal of non-governmental organizations. It was therefore essential to incorporate those organizations into a framework where they could contribute to and be influenced by United Nations activities. Unless they saw the Organization as a leader in areas of concern to them, they would go their own way and the United Nations influence would be seriously diminished. A broad-based review of the modalities for participation by non-governmental organizations would reveal a great deal about the United Nations potential relationship with them in the future and would be extremely useful.

Mr. SUGANO (Japan) said that his delegation could not support any proposal to set up an independent and separate secretariat for the Commission on Sustainable Development, headed by an under-secretary-general, since that would undermine the Secretary-General's efforts to consolidate a number of bodies in the economic and social fields. The secretariat should be established within the Department of Economic and Social Development. Although his delegation appreciated the proposal made by Switzerland, it felt that the question of the location of the Commission's secretariat should be given careful consideration in the context of the overall functioning of the United Nations system. National reports were a very important part of the overall process begun at the Rio Conference and the secretariat should encourage the submission of such reports. It would be interesting to know how many countries had already submitted reports and how many were expected to do so.

Mr. ARELLANO (Mexico) supported the statement made by Mr. Strong with regard to the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the other measures envisaged. Mexico would express its views on the institutional arrangements to be made in that regard at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

Ms. CASTAÑO (Colombia) said that her delegation would do likewise and inquired how Mr. Strong viewed more active participation by regional development banks in the follow-up to the Rio Conference.

Mr. WU Hai Long (China) agreed with the representative of Pakistan that the questions relating to the Rio Conference should be discussed in the General Assembly. He inquired whether the small-scale, independent secretariat as envisaged by Mr. Strong, would draw upon the resources of the United Nations system or be entirely separate.

Mr. STRONG (Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) replied that the secretariat would not be independent but should have a strong mandate and high-level status so that it could report directly to the Secretary-General. It should not be integrated into a body which itself had major programmatic and operational functions. Experience showed that when a United Nations structure with a major substantive function played a coordinating role, it was viewed with suspicion by other United Nations bodies with which it might be in competition. That would impede the secretariat's ability to carry out its coordinating function. The location of the secretariat was far less important than its attributes. It must have the professional competence, mandate and status to command the respect of the bodies with which it must cooperate. Otherwise, it would not be very effective, since it would not have funds to disburse.

At the Rio Conference, it had been recognized that the arrangements made, particularly those to support developing countries in the field of technology and finance, would begin modestly and would need to be nurtured in the follow-up process. If that process was not credible, the hopes of the developing countries in that regard would be disappointed. The secretariat would be answerable to the Secretary-General, and its structure should enable it to exercise a coordinating function, building on the positive experience gained at the Rio Conference and enlisting the support and participation of the entire United Nations system and the intergovernmental and non-governmental communities.

In response to the representative of Japan, he said that, to date, 168 countries had submitted reports, a remarkable endorsement of the Conference's importance, particularly since some of those countries had only recently gained statehood.

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The development banks had participated actively in the preparations for the Rio Conference and, as they constituted an invaluable resource, they should also be fully incorporated in the follow-up arrangements.

Mr. ORLIANGE (France) said that his delegation associated itself fully with the views expressed by the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Community and its member States, adding that France favoured Geneva as the site for the proposed unit to deal with follow-up activities.

Many important questions had already been resolved and he stressed the need to resist the temptation to turn the General Assembly into a rerun of that Conference.

He requested more information on the scope and mandate of the proposed advisory body and the expected date of publication of the report on the Conference.

Mr. GATHUNGU (Observer for Kenya) fully supported the views expressed by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77. He requested further information on the relationship between the proposed secretariat (which Kenya saw as a unit rather than a secretariat) and ongoing operational activities at country level under UNDP programmes. Those activities were initiated on proposals originating from the countries themselves and he wondered how the proposed secretariat would establish the legitimacy of its operations in carrying out its own mandate and whether its functions would overlap with those of other agencies and organizations already involved in Agenda 21 activities.

He also asked for clarification of what was meant by national Agenda 21 programmes and, in particular, their relationship to UNDP country programmes.

His delegation was concerned that, if the new secretariat were given a strong mandate, sustainable development measures would be implemented according to a top-down model, whereby countries were merely required to obey instructions from above. He hoped that the proposed secretariat would not merely bring the road from Rio back to New York or Geneva.

Ms. TOMKINSON (Australia) asked when the report regarding interim arrangements would be available to delegations. In particular, she expressed the hope that any budgetary implications of the decision regarding the location of the secretariat would be made clear.

Mr. ATIF (Kuwait) asked what steps were being taken to avoid any duplication between the functions of the proposed Commission and those of the existing subcommittees of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. VAN SCHAIK (Observer for the Netherlands) asked what would be the functions of the proposed secretariat during the transition period and whether voluntary funds were available to finance any necessary arrangements.

Noting that the Secretary-General of the Conference would be relinquishing his post the following month, he wondered whether he (the Secretary-General) would be present at the General Assembly to guide debate on that subject.

Mr. BAYTCHEV (Bulgaria) said that his delegation fully agreed with the views expressed by the Secretary-General of the Conference on the far-reaching political significance of the Rio Conference, and in particular Agenda 21, and he noted that sustainable development was vital to the success of the political process in Bulgaria. Since the proposed Commission would play a key role in the follow-up activities, its modalities should be determined by the General Assembly.

Mr. STRONG (Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) said, with reference to the proposed advisory body, that the creation of such a body had been suggested in Agenda 21 (E/1992/99, para. 38.18). In his statement he had in fact been referring to a more specific advisory panel on finance, the creation of which he considered of vital importance, particularly in view of the financial constraints which were likely to affect follow-up activities. The functions of that panel could be exercised by the high-level advisory board suggested in Agenda 21.

He had no information as yet on the state of the Secretary-General's report, but his secretariat stood ready to make whatever contribution it could to that report.

With regard to the apprehensions expressed by the representative of Kenya concerning the strong mandate of the secretariat, he insisted that there was nothing in the secretariat mandate as he envisaged it which would compromise the principle of UNDP service to Member States. The implementation of Agenda 21 was certain to increase the demands of Member States on the system and additional support would therefore be required.

(Mr. Strong)

With regard to the reporting relationship, he assured the representative of Kenya that it would not follow the top-down model but would be a fully systemic process. Inputs had been received from countries, through their presentations at the Conference and through national and regional meetings, out of which a global programme, Agenda 21, had crystallized. That programme could be implemented only by those who had fashioned it: the States themselves, who would need the benefit of continuing interaction, such as the secretariat would provide, to give them the necessary benchmarks for their programmes.

Moreover UNDP country programmes were not the same as national Agenda 21 programmes. The latter resulted from the incorporation into countries' national programmes of those aspects of Agenda 21 which they considered relevant to their conditions and for whose implementation they might require additional assistance. There was therefore no conflict between Agenda 21 and UNDP country-level activities. The road from Rio would not lead back to New York or Geneva, but would branch into an extensive network, leading through all countries and enabling all actors in the process to communicate and cooperate in carrying out the massive undertaking of Agenda 21.

Replying to the representative of Australia, he said that, as the report in question was the responsibility of the budget division, it would be more appropriate for that division to report on its status. The budgetary implications of the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report would be made clear.

The need to avoid duplication was a perennial problem affecting all areas of the system and could only be resolved by clearly defining the mandates and linkages of each of the bodies concerned. It was therefore vital to keep those mandates under constant review. At the same time, a certain amount of duplication at the margins, where bodies intersected but worked from different perspectives, could be useful and was even moderately desirable.

With regard to the transitional arrangements, he said that there was a vast amount of work under way on the follow-up activities and it was therefore impossible to make a clean break between the process of the Conference itself and the implementation of its decisions. The continued involvement of the

(Mr. Strong)

small number of professional staff was vital. The Conference secretariat had originally operated with a full-time staff of more than 60; that number had already been drastically reduced and there was no justification for further reducing it to the point where it was only able to write reports. It would almost certainly be cheaper to maintain the current secretariat than to discontinue it and to start afresh.

In response to the final two questions put by the Observer for the Netherlands, he said that, while he did not have exact figures, not much was available in the form of voluntary funds and that, as for his involvement at the General Assembly, he was at the disposal of the Secretary-General.

The PRESIDENT said that, as Mr. Strong was making his last appearance in his capacity as Secretary-General of the Conference, it was appropriate to congratulate him on his work, which would serve as an inspiration to others, and to assure him that he would leave behind, in the poet Longfellow's phrase, "footprints in the sands of time".

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

For participants only

E/1992/SR.34
28 July 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Substantive session of 1992

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 34th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 21 July 1992, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. MROZIEWICZ (Poland)

later: Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco)
(Vice-President)

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Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (continued)

Revitalization of the Economic and Social Council (continued)

Establishment of new subsidiary bodies of the Council (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued) (E/1992/63, E/1992/90 and E/1992/99)

REVITALIZATION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (E/1992/86 and E/1992/101)

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE COUNCIL (continued) (E/1992/76)

Mr. KHAN (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the high-level segment had provided a unique opportunity to discuss matters of common interest with a view to collective international action. The active participation of heads of agencies and institutions had been very useful. The Council, in pursuing the overall objectives of revitalization, should have due regard to General Assembly resolution 45/264 and the fundamental principle that the General Assembly was the supreme policy-making organ of the United Nations.

The holding of one consolidated, substantive session had delayed confirmation of the mandates of special representatives/rapporteurs and working groups on human rights. The mandates had therefore had to be provisionally approved, on an exceptional basis, at a reconvened organizational session. The Council should not allow such a situation to recur, and should convene as early as possible. If necessary, subsidiary organs should adjust their schedules without asking the Council itself to make adjustments.

While the revitalization exercise was intended to enhance the role of the Council in the economic and social fields, the supreme political policy-making organ remained the General Assembly. The exercise should result in increased efficiency, greater complementarity with the work of the General Assembly, an avoidance of duplication, and an integrated approach to social issues.

(Mr. Khan, Pakistan)

The Group of 77 looked forward to participating in the open-ended ad hoc working group proposed by the President and agreed with the Secretary-General that there was a need to conduct a periodic review of progress made in implementing the International Development Strategy.

Mr. MARTIN (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the 12 member States of the European Community, said that some of the revitalization procedures proposed in Economic and Social Council resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/114 had been made redundant by the adoption of General Assembly resolution 45/264, and should be discarded. Further, the themes for the high-level segment should not be determined on the basis of the multi-year work programme, but should be selected by the Council at its organizational session on the basis of topicality, with a balance between economic and social questions.

Themes for the coordination segment, on the other hand, should be chosen on the basis of a work programme, but there must be enough flexibility to enable the Council to examine specific problems of coordination as they arose. The demonstrated usefulness of the new coordination segment suggested that the future of the joint meetings of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Committee for Programme and Coordination should be reconsidered. There was an urgent need for the Administrative Committee on Coordination, on the basis of enhanced policy guidance from the Council, to discuss ways in which specialized agencies could better perform their functions. The Council was not monitoring the agencies adequately.

While the current session had been much more purposeful and action oriented, there was still scope for improvement. Documentation still arrived too late, preventing adequate preparation. The fault did not lie with delegations for asking for too much documentation. In that context, Secretariat officials should not approach delegations with draft resolutions containing requests for unnecessary documentation.

While the new arrangements for the organizational segment were working, on the whole, there should be no need for three meetings of the organizational session, as had happened in 1992. The Council should re-examine the way in which it confirmed the mandates of its subsidiary bodies, particularly in the human rights field.

(Mr. Martin, United Kingdom)

It was clearly important to ensure that the newly established subsidiary bodies of the Council acted in a coordinated manner. In particular, adjustments might be required to accommodate the proposed Commission on Sustainable Development, which would undoubtedly have an impact on the whole United Nations system. Careful consideration should be given to the consolidated mandates of the new subsidiary bodies of the Council proposed by the Secretary-General (E/1992/76). In the case of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, for example, mandates arising from Agenda 21 should be integrated with those of its predecessor committee to produce an intellectually coherent agenda. The European Community delegations were willing to engage in consultations to that end.

Concern that the Council frequently duplicated the Assembly's work had led to calls for a review - which was to be held at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly - on ways of coordinating the work of the Council and the Assembly. While the Council's structure had been radically changed by General Assembly resolution 45/264, its agenda remained unchanged. Accordingly, the European Community delegations felt that the time had come to overhaul the Council's agenda and eliminate superfluous items. The aim should be to ensure that the level of the Council's proceedings throughout the session was on a par with that achieved at the high-level segment.

Turning to the question of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), he noted that the number of NGOs in consultative status had grown steadily. Non-governmental organizations made a significant contribution to the work of the United Nations. The European Community delegations supported participation by NGOs in all appropriate forums, including human rights bodies - where their participation was essential. A wide range of non-governmental organizations had participated in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held at Rio de Janeiro, and had a crucial role to play in upcoming international meetings. In that connection, the General Assembly would need to determine the means of participation of non-governmental organizations in the proposed Commission on Sustainable Development.

(Mr. Martin, United Kingdom)

The European Community delegations welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit (E/1992/63), whose workload had increased dramatically. Adequate resources should be made available to the Unit to enable it to carry out its functions effectively. The Unit should act as a channel for liaison between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, and not pass the task on to Member States.

Mr. LICHEM (Austria) said that four major functions had been entrusted to the Council. In general, the programme-approval and monitoring function had been discharged well, and the proposed Commission on Sustainable Development would add an important dimension to the Council's responsibilities. Equally, the Nordic initiative could expand the Council's involvement in the development strategy function.

The coordination function entrusted to the Council had proved difficult to discharge owing to the complex intersectoral, interdisciplinary and inter-agency nature of economic and social affairs. The fragmentation of responsibility for the three major sectors of economic affairs, social affairs and the environment and natural resources had been compounded by piecemeal institutional growth reflecting the different priorities of different times. The Council was now moving to discharge its coordination function more effectively than in the past. Nevertheless, "centrally planned" coordination could only do so much; each organization would still need to respond to the specific challenges arising in its area of competence.

The overall economic and social policy assessment and guideline function had been performed least satisfactorily by the Council, which had not exercised any leadership in global economic policies. The introduction of the high-level segment, however, augured well for the future.

The Council's failure to discharge its coordination and overall policy functions, a failure that was all the more serious as sustainable development was becoming a key criterion, was the main reason for the marginalization of the Council. Revitalization efforts must address the gaps identified in those two crucial functions.

The Council might find it productive to consider contemporary industrial management theory as it related to decentralized units. The major tools

(Mr. Lichem, Austria)

of relevance were the provision of an adequate framework and clear leadership through well-defined overall objectives.

Whether the Council could apply modern industrial management techniques to achieve leadership within a highly fragmented system, to streamline activities in the economic and social fields, to offer overall objectives for environment and development issues and to bring its normative authority to bear was related to the question of establishing a system of integrated reports. Such reports could serve as a basis for comprehensive analysis and policy formulation, while the facts presented would provide guidance and thus exercise a degree of normative power over the multitude of decision makers. It was surprising that the United Nations had yet to prepare such comprehensive reports, rather than the specialized reports it confined itself to.

Specifically, the Council could consider issuing sectoral reports on the world economic situation, the world social situation and the state of the environment, and a fourth report highlighting the interrelations between those three sectors. The Council should devote its attention above all to the fourth, comprehensive report. Such a comprehensive report on the state of the environment and development would provide a basis for policies and priorities relating to sustainable development, and offer clear choices to the multitude of actors in the economic and social fields. Further, such a system of reporting would address existing lacunae with regard to coordination and policy guidance.

A two-way information flow would bring sectoral data and assessments from the United Nations system to the Council, while comprehensive analysis and policy recommendations would flow from the Council to the various agencies. Such a process would yield "soft" yet effective coordination throughout the system, since decision-making bodies were unlikely to base their decisions on assumptions that conflicted with data contained in the reports or to guidelines adopted by the Council. The same was true of Governments and the private sector.

The Secretary-General had rightly pointed to the possible need for the Council to provide information of relevance to questions of international peace and security, which the system his delegation was proposing could generate.

(Mr. Lichem, Austria)

Such a system would first require the establishment of an ad hoc working group to define the details. Next the Administrative Committee on Coordination could prepare concrete schedules and criteria for reporting. Lastly, the Council could adopt an overall scheme for the reports in coordination with the specialized agencies, perhaps on a triennial basis. The high-level segment of the Council could debate a first such comprehensive report on the state of the environment and development in 1995.

Mr. GORELIK (Russian Federation) noted that the success of the high-level segment had paved the way for speeding up the reform process essential to the revitalization of the Council. More impetus should be given to the efforts of the ad hoc working group in the task of drawing up a wide range of reforms, inter alia, by seeking to promote agreement on a number of practical measures to support the process initiated by General Assembly resolution 45/264.

If the various proposals were implemented, the Council's sessions would consist of four segments: a high-level segment, an expanded coordination segment, an operational activities segment and plenary meetings. The risk of overlapping and repetition could be reduced by discontinuing the Council's Economic and Social Committees.

Discussion in the coordination segment at the current session had shown the Council's potential for coordination within the United Nations system. That segment was bound to benefit if general coordination issues were discussed after thematic topics had been considered. Intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination, too, would be further enhanced if the Secretary-General, as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, could invite the President of the Council and the Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, and perhaps the Council's officers, to take part in certain ACC meetings. The representative of the United Kingdom, speaking on behalf of the European Community, had raised an interesting point regarding Joint Meetings of CPC and ACC. If their functions were transferred to the coordination segment of the Council the latter would become the most authoritative forum for discussions among Governments, specialized agencies and the international financial institutions. The

(Mr. Gorelik, Russian Federation)

Council should request the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its next substantive session, his proposals on delineating responsibilities within the United Nations system.

His delegation supported the call for increased resources made by the Chairman of the Economic Commission for Europe (E/1992/101). As a result of recent changes in the world political scene, the Commission's membership had increased considerably, as had its role in the overall European process. Additional funding was urgently needed, and he urged the Council to bring the matter to the attention of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General's report on the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit (E/1992/63) was useful, although the section entitled "Concluding observations" contained none. His delegation would support a draft resolution calling upon the Secretary-General to take appropriate measures aimed at increasing the resources available to the Unit not only during the current programme budget biennium but in the next one also; and hoped that such a move would be widely supported. Enhancing the role of that Unit would be a major first step towards overcoming the difficulties frequently encountered in relations between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

Mr. MARKS (United States of America) generally welcomed the new format for the Council's sessions. The deliberations during the high-level segment, including the one-day discussion with representatives of the international financial institutions, had been stimulating, although more candour would have been welcome. Discussion in the coordination segment could have been more fruitful, and would be in future if it focused on efforts to deal with particular issues rather than on the issues themselves. He was sure, however, that genuine dialogue would develop since the opportunity had been created. It would help, in that regard, if the relevant documentation was circulated in good time and concentrated on the main issues.

The chief agent in revitalization was the Council itself. The case for reforming the economic and social sectors of the Organization was well established, the joint Nordic memorandum (E/1992/91) having provided interesting proposals for that purpose. The action should cover certain broad categories. One was a reform of intergovernmental institutions in general,

(Mr. Marks, United States)

and the Council in particular; his delegation appreciated the work already done by the Secretary-General in that regard. Another was the reform of operational activities at the field level; his delegation had made a detailed proposal in that regard during the current session. A third category was the reform and reorganization of operational organs and bodies at the Headquarters level, including the Secretariat, which would mean strengthening the links between them, the better to coordinate guidance and feedback. The ad hoc working group recently established by the President had the heavy responsibility of initiating a close review of the Council. In carrying out that task, it should be remembered that the operational role assumed by the Organization over the years should remain a secondary function.

Coordination of assistance activities was vital in order to ensure that United Nations assistance was put to the best use. While uniformity of governance of the four operational agencies, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA should be ensured through a single entity, there was no need to establish a new body for that purpose; the Council, suitably strengthened, could and should do the job. As part of its annual sessions, it could carry out the functions currently performed by the other bodies' governing bodies, and could be assisted, between sessions, by small executive committees to monitor performance, decide on plans and budgets, and examine new programme initiatives. The restructuring of the Council's subsidiary bodies would also have to be dealt with. For example, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development might well be combined with the proposed Commission on Sustainable Development. In that light, the new mandates proposed in document E/1992/76 should be submitted to the General Assembly for consideration.

Mr. JIN Yongjian (China) said that the revitalization of the Council was an integral part of the Organization's restructuring in the economic, social and related fields; specific recommendations and proposals should be placed within that overall context in order to ensure a balanced outcome. It was necessary, therefore, before making any further revitalization efforts, to ascertain the United Nations true development role and improve the division of labour between the Council and the General Assembly.

(Mr. Jin Yongjian, China)

In selecting themes for discussion in the Council's high-level segment, the multi-year work programme and new development trends must be considered. Population and development should be the theme selected for the high-level segment of the Council's next substantive session, in order that the Council could play a major role in preparations for the forthcoming conference on the subject. With reference to the theme for the coordination segment, his delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation on a multi-year work programme, and suggested that the subject to be discussed at the next substantive session should be environment and development. His delegation also applauded the Secretary-General's recommendation that similar or closely related agenda items should be properly grouped, and stressed the importance of efforts to ensure timely circulation and improved quality of documents.

Mr. ARELLANO (Mexico) said that the report of the Secretary-General (E/1992/86) outlined the obstacles still to be overcome in implementing the measures agreed upon for revitalizing the Council. The political will evinced in the adoption of General Assembly resolution 45/264 must be maintained. The basic guidelines established in that resolution, particularly with regard to democratic participation in decision-taking, must be borne in mind, and the restructuring must be carried out with due regard to the principles enshrined in the Charter, particularly those of respect for sovereignty and of the sovereign equality of Member States. The spheres of competence of the system's various bodies must likewise be respected, and the end result must genuinely contribute to the economic and social development of the countries most in need.

Operational activities were an important aspect of international cooperation for development; but efforts to improve their efficiency must not adversely affect the broader issues related to the basic mandates envisaged in the Charter. In the current first phase of implementation, care must be taken to ensure that all innovative proposals were carefully considered, in order to maintain the transparency of debate enjoyed hitherto and avoid any deviation from the true objectives. Development and international cooperation were valid issues in their own right, and his delegation was slightly concerned by the tendency to subordinate them to other issues in discussions on the role of

(Mr. Arellano, Mexico)

the United Nations. The purpose of restructuring the Council was to foster international cooperation for development; the aim should be to strengthen the Council, not to weaken it.

Mr. KASOULIDES (Observer for Cyprus) said that his country attached great importance to the effective functioning of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit. The importance of the NGO's role had been recognized from the Organization's inception; their participation had been institutionalized by means of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) and had been enhanced through the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations and the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit. Not only did non-governmental organizations make a valuable contribution to the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies but they also were a link between international bodies and ordinary citizens. Cyprus therefore welcomed the news contained in the Secretary-General's report (E/1992/63) that the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit, had seen its workload increased tenfold. Given the wide variety and increased functions assigned to the Unit, its human and financial resources should be increased.

The role of non-governmental organizations was everywhere recognized, especially in activities related to the Commission on Human Rights and its Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. The international community should show its gratitude to the dedicated groups and individuals who, disregarding their own safety, acted as the conscience of mankind.

Finally, noting that the forthcoming World Conference on Human Rights would provide a forum for assessing progress in the field of human rights, examining means of strengthening the implementation of existing standards and breaking new ground in the interrelationship of State and world community, he said that preparations for that conference, and for other scheduled conferences would be facilitated by applying the "Draft standard rules of procedure for United Nations conferences".

Mr. BUTLER (Australia) said that there was a clear need to revitalize the Economic and Social Council. The failure to close the development gap and the poverty gap, despite the resources and time devoted to

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

that end, was a clear indication that something was wrong. The Council needed to return to basics and ask itself whether it was fulfilling the requirements laid down in the United Nations Charter. He agreed with the Secretary-General that the Council had a role to play under the Charter in its sphere of competence broadly similar to that performed by the Security Council in the field of peace and security. In that connection, Chapter X of the Charter provided all the guidance necessary and clearly set out the fundamental goals to be pursued.

With regard to operational principles for the future work of the Council, he felt that all proposals should be judged by the criterion of effectiveness in revitalizing the Council, regardless of whether or not they met particular concerns, such as staffing levels or cost. In addition, responsibility for particular tasks should be allocated clearly to the various organs within the United Nations system and, in considering institutional proposals, it was vital to ensure that tasks were carried out only once. The present critical juncture offered an extraordinary opportunity for change, which must be seized since it might not recur.

He drew attention to what might be called the "reality gap" affecting the Council's work, which was reflected in a tendency to confuse talk with action. Frequently, if a matter had been sufficiently discussed, it was deemed to have been dealt with. Finally, the question of information was of the utmost importance. Accurate and relevant information was vital in order to take sound policy decisions and, in that connection, he welcomed the proposal by the representative of Austria concerning a comprehensive periodic report on the state of environment and development, and hoped that the matter would be taken up in the ad hoc working group.

Mr. BAHADIAN (Brazil) said that effective implementation of the agreements on environment and development reached in Rio must be one of the highest priorities. The institutional arrangements for follow-up activities would be discussed at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly. Discussions should cover such questions as the location, membership, rules of procedure and precise mandate of the Commission on Sustainable Development; the size, status and location of its secretariat structure; and guidelines for

(Mr. Bahadian, Brazil)

coordination. It was also important to determine the modalities for the rapid implementation of the decisions on desertification and to ensure system-wide coordination in the implementation of the Conference's decisions.

Since the Commission on Sustainable Development was intended to serve as a high-level forum for the institutional follow-up to the Rio Conference, its establishment should not be seen as part of the restructuring process, which was geared to improving the functioning of the United Nations system in promoting the economic growth and development of developing countries. The establishment of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the consolidated mandates of the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy (Council decision 1992/218) were part of that process.

Mr. Amaziane (Morocco) (Vice-President), took the Chair.

Mr. RYSINSKI (Poland) welcomed the many new proposals put forward during the high-level segment, particularly those by the Nordic countries on governance and finance. The setting up of an intersessional reform mechanism might be complemented by extending the work of the Council's Bureau into the intersessional period and making use of its monitoring capacity.

The international community appeared to be ready to overhaul a large part of the system of governance and management of the economic and social sectors at intergovernmental and Secretariat levels, and sufficient momentum had been generated for establishing a new partnership of multilateral interests. There was growing recognition of the need to focus attention and resources on international cooperation and development, and adopt a pragmatic approach by determining major areas of focus within a multi-year programme, to be reviewed and adjusted as needed.

In seeking to revitalize the Council, it was vital to clarify the responsibilities of the different bodies dealing with economic and social issues and stress their complementary nature. In that connection, the role of regional bodies should be enhanced and their activities focused on cross-sectoral issues with a clear-cut division of labour and efforts to avoid duplication.

(Mr. Rysinski, Poland)

Noting that a number of proposals had been put forward during the high-level segment, he said that changes in the Secretariat were crucial to revitalization and should lead to stricter determination of managerial and operational responsibilities so as to streamline structures and improve performance in the interests of better coordination and leadership. The same was true in the field, where the role of resident coordinators and regional bureaux needed to be strengthened. Highly qualified and motivated staff were needed to tackle newly emerging issues. New blood was vital to avoid the dangers of fatigue and inertia, and increased emphasis should be placed on productivity and competition to encourage performance. The need to ensure equitable geographical and gender representation must also be borne in mind.

Mr. SEZAKI (Japan) said that, although important and timely, the subjects chosen for both the high-level segment and the coordination segment had been much too broad, making it difficult to achieve a convergence of views or hold a focused discussion. If the segments were to be successful, it was vital to select appropriate themes. The failure of many of the heads of the multilateral financial and trade institutions, specialized agencies and United Nations bodies to comply with the request to circulate their statements in advance and present their positions concisely had also been unfortunate. The limited time available for the high-level policy dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions had made it difficult for the large number of delegations to address the issues on the agenda productively. However, it would be difficult to resolve that problem without taking up the question of the number of participants.

He welcomed the consolidation of the various economic and social units of the Secretariat into a single department and expressed the hope that it would discharge its responsibilities more effectively. He stressed that any units set up as part of the follow-up to the Rio Conference should come under the Department of Economic and Social Development and be based in New York.

His delegation opposed the suggeston that the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly should be abolished. They performed necessary functions and should be maintained. Adjustments should be made within the Council in order to avoid overlapping with the work of the General Assembly.

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

With regard to the functions of an international development council proposed by the Nordic countries, his delegation agreed on the need to reform the system-wide intergovernmental bodies for operational activities and believed that the issue should be addressed as part of the reform of the Economic and Social Council.

The proposal for the introduction of an intersessional mechanism deserved close consideration. Such a mechanism should be established only to cope with situations which could not be dealt with by convening a special session of the Council, as provided for under the existing rules of procedure. His delegation remained open to any firm proposals which might be made, but stressed that the mandate and composition of any mechanism would have to be studied carefully.

Finally, it was unfortunate that virtually none of the documents had been circulated sufficiently in advance. He urged the Secretariat to resolve the continuing problems in that area and expressed support for the proposal put forward in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1992/86) that the Council should consider reducing the number of items on its agenda through further consolidation or biennialization.

Ms. ARYSTANBEKOVA (Observer for Kazakhstan) said that the various proposals put forward with a view to rationalizing the operational activities of the United Nations system merited careful consideration.

Like other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Kazakhstan was engaged in the transition to a market economy. Several months previously the President of the Republic had outlined his strategy for the consolidation of Kazakhstan as a sovereign State, defining it as a policy aimed at securing an open economy and rapid development in a society based on democracy, the rule of law, and respect for the rights and freedoms of the individual.

Her delegation was confident that Kazakhstan would succeed in taking its place in the world economy. Measures were being taken to stabilize the economy and strengthen the financial system, to reduce inflation, to reform taxation and to implement a programme aimed at privatization and freedom from State control. Everything possible was being done to create an economic union

(Ms. Arystanbekova, Observer, Kazakhstan)

within the framework of the former USSR on the basis of free trade and unrestricted circulation of goods, capital, labour and services.

To achieve those goals it was essential to make use of the accumulated international experience in solving economic and social problems. Kazakhstan was counting on close cooperation with the United Nations system; it would very shortly become a member of the Bretton Woods institutions.

Mr. HUSLID (Observer for Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the consolidated session of the Economic and Social Council had proved very positive, particularly with regard to the high-level segment. The agreement to set up a working group to prepare specific proposals for the forthcoming General Assembly would undoubtedly maintain and increase the momentum already gained. The dialogue between Member States and the heads of key organizations and agencies had proved very profitable in addressing the system-wide efforts to eradicate poverty and to combat AIDS.

Some practical adjustments in the working schedules of the Council and its subsidiary bodies would no doubt be needed in order to tackle unforeseen problems, such as undue delays in the confirmation of the mandates of various working groups and rapporteurs, and more seriously, the late issuance of most of the important documentation for the session.

It was clear that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development would have a major influence on the agenda of the United Nations in the years to come. In the Nordic delegations' view, the United Nations system as a whole must be strengthened in order to deal effectively with environment and development in a truly integrated manner, and it was noteworthy in that regard that the Council had been accorded the important responsibility of considering the reports of the Commission on Sustainable Development before they came before the General Assembly.

Both the Council and the United Nations as a whole must become more active in international economic cooperation. In the division of responsibilities it was essential that the United Nations retain and strengthen its analytical capabilities so that economic thinking and debate were not left exclusively to the international financial institutions and trade organizations.

(Mr. Huslid, Observer, Norway)

The Nordic delegations were pleased to note what could be described as partial success in achieving partial reform. The inadequacies of the Economic and Social Council did not reside solely in the structure and functioning of the Council itself, but also in its agenda and in the quality of the inputs it received, in addition to the problem of its relationship with subsidiary bodies in the economic and social fields on the one hand, and the General Assembly on the other. The specific changes agreed with regard to the format of the Council should be regarded as a first step: for reform to succeed, a subsidiary apparatus of high professional quality was required. At the current session the Council was called upon to fill the vacancies on the three new expert bodies established in pursuance of the reform efforts undertaken at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly. However, the reform of only three subsidiary bodies was much too modest an accomplishment for a General Assembly which had had a much wider mandate for change. There was a need to regain momentum in reforming the subsidiary apparatus in order to achieve a more effective United Nations role in international economic dialogue.

The Nordic delegations looked forward to the next important stages of the revitalization process, including the review of ways to enhance the complementarity of the work of the Council and the Assembly in accordance with Article 60 of the Charter. It was important not to discuss the same issues three times over - initially in a subsidiary body that was supposed to be composed of experts but in fact consisted of representatives from the Second and Third Committees of the Council, subsequently in the Council itself, and finally in the General Assembly. In conclusion, the Nordic delegations stressed that institutional changes were of little use if the improved institutions were not properly utilized. Member Governments had a responsibility to ensure that the Council could fulfil its mandate, in conjunction with the General Assembly, as the central body in the United Nations system as a whole for policy dialogue and coordination in the economic and social fields, to which the dimension of sustainable development had now been added.

Ms. CASTANO (Colombia) said that the current session had offered a useful opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures adopted under

(Ms. Castano, Colombia)

General Assembly resolution 45/264, and her delegation wished to participate actively in the open-ended working group established to continue deliberations.

In addition to the difficulties mentioned by the representative of Pakistan, she wished to highlight the problem of coordinating the sessions of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. The fact that the Secretariat had been authorized to take interim administrative measures regarding the mandates of the Commission on Human Rights should be regarded as exceptional, since such an authorization was contrary to the spirit of resolution 45/264.

Revitalization should not be linked to the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development or the Council's new subsidiary bodies dealing with natural resources and new and renewable sources of energy and science and technology for development; the latter were the outcome of protracted intergovernmental negotiations and their autonomy should not be prejudiced.

Mrs. HARRIS (Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council) said that the members of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (CONGO) had affiliates or members in virtually every country of the world, and played an essential role in implementing economic and social programmes. Interaction with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had two major aspects. One was to introduce wider perspectives in international policy-making bodies, reflecting the knowledge and experience of members based in many countries, and the other was to stimulate activity at the operational level. A concerted effort was needed to revise and strengthen the relationship between the NGOs in consultative status and the United Nations system, recognizing the potential of the former as essential partners. That would depend on having a strong United Nations focal point and on a very considerable reinforcement of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit. It would also require guidelines regarding NGO participation in the planning for major United Nations conferences to be held over the next few years. The NGO community had organized many successful forums in connection with such conferences in previous decades, and it looked forward to enlarging that concept in order to

(Mrs. Harris)

involve NGOs, governments and international secretariats in the public debate on issues of world concern. In order to contribute effectively in such discussions, NGOs needed timely access to documents.

The NGOs were very interested in developing their relationship with the United Nations at the regional level, and plans were being made to encourage NGO members to take part in regional meetings scheduled in connection with forthcoming United Nations conferences. In conclusion, she said that the expertise available within the non-governmental organizations should be drawn upon more systematically by the United Nations system. CONGO had prepared many reports and discussion papers over the years with a view to enhancing and facilitating a constructive relationship, and would be pleased to share that material.

Ms. WIENER (World Federation of United Nations Associations) said that a review of the functioning of the secretariat structure which serviced close to 950 non-governmental organizations in consultative status was long overdue as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1992/63). The important role played by the non-governmental organizations in consultative status had been recognized with increasing frequency in the resolutions adopted by all intergovernmental bodies, and had been emphasized in several statements by the Secretary-General.

The question of the NGO contribution to the preparatory process for United Nations conferences, and their participatory rights in those conferences, would again be raised in connection with the adoption of the rules of procedure for several forthcoming United Nations conferences.

She drew the Council's attention to the fact that, in the case of international conferences convened by the Council under Article 62, paragraph 4, of the Charter, paragraph 34 of Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968 applied. In the case of conferences convened by the General Assembly, she recommended that the sections relevant to NGOs contained in the "Draft standard rules of procedure for United Nations conferences" should be applied. Those rules, although not formally adopted by the General Assembly, had served as a useful guideline in the case of several United Nations conferences. In her view, application of those rules would ensure consistency

(Ms. Wiener)

in dealings with NGOs, both in terms of invitations and participatory rights. It would also help to avoid time-consuming debates, unnecessary controversies and efforts to invent new procedures. Such matters could usefully be entrusted to the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit.

At its 1991 session, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations had called on NGOs to utilize the possibilities offered by their consultative status to the fullest extent, but they could do so only if they were able to rely on a secretariat structure with sufficient resources and time to assist them in channelling their contributions and exercising their consultative status. Clearly, however, the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit, which had only two Professional and two General Service staff members at its disposal, could not continue to cope with its ever-increasing workload. It was high time that the importance of NGOs in consultative status was reflected in a review and upgrading of the Unit, to ensure that its resources were commensurate with its responsibilities.

Ms. von ROEMER (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) said that the situation of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit was indeed grave and called for urgent remedial action. Statistics alone bore that out: in 1948 there had been 41 accredited NGOs with approximately 100 representatives. In 1992 those members had increased to 943, and approximately 2,000 representatives - an increase of 2,200 per cent. Yet the size of the Unit servicing the NGOs had remained the same. Moreover, there was every indication that NGOs would continue to proliferate.

While relations between NGOs and the United Nations had earlier been marred by a great deal of scepticism and mistrust, that situation had improved considerably. That was reflected in the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, which had transformed itself from something of a battleground into a serious and competent body providing valuable support to the NGO community.

A strengthening and upgrading of the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit would give concrete expression to the positive attitude towards NGOs, and would signify that the United Nations was taking the partnership seriously.

(Ms. von Roemer)

Moreover, it would save time and resources in other parts of the Organization if the Unit were in a position to carry out the various mandates originally assigned to it, in particular its responsibility for servicing the participation of NGOs in United Nations conferences. Lately that function had been taken entirely out of its hands, resulting in much confusion and frustration. She wondered why there should be a Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, which worked hard to determine which organizations were worthy of accreditation and to which category they should be assigned, if the preparatory committee for every large-scale United Nations conference and the secretariat assigned to it proceeded, as it were, to reinvent the wheel. At the latest conference, the result had been the accreditation on an equal footing of scores of groups with no previous links to the United Nations, some of them with as few as two members, or even no members at all. The new tendency to assign all NGOs to a regional category according to the location of their headquarters also indicated a lack of understanding, as did the attempt to assign NGOs to different sectors. The Non-Governmental Organizations Unit should be involved in each step of the preparations for a conference, including accreditation, from the very beginning. She therefore urged the Council to take immediate measures to enable the Non-Governmental Organizations Unit to fulfil all of its mandates, particularly in view of the preparations now under way for forthcoming major conferences.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.